

deadline to RUS at the address specified in the applicable announcement. Instructions for submittal of applications electronically will be established in the grant announcement.

§ 1709.119 Review of applications.

(a) RUS will review each application package received to determine whether the applicant is eligible and whether the application is timely, complete, and responsive to the requirements set forth in the grant announcement.

(b) RUS may, at its discretion, contact the applicant to clarify or supplement information in the application needed to determine eligibility, identifying information, and grant requests to allow for informed review. Failure of the applicant to provide such information in response to a written request by the Agency within the time frame established by the Agency may result in rejection of the application.

(c) After consideration of the information submitted, the Assistant Administrator, Electric Program will determine whether an applicant or project is eligible and whether an application is timely, complete, and responsive to the grant announcement and shall notify the applicant in writing. The Assistant Administrator's decision on eligibility may be appealed to the Administrator.

§ 1709.120 Evaluation of applications.

(a) The Agency will establish one or more rating panels to review and rate the grant applications. The panels may include persons not employed by the Agency.

(b) All timely and complete applications that meet the eligibility requirements will be referred to the rating panel. The rating panel will evaluate and rate all referred applications according to the evaluation criteria and weights established in the grant announcement. Panel members may make recommendations for conditions on grant awards to promote successful performance of the grant or to assure compliance with other Federal requirements.

(c) After the rating panel has evaluated and scored all proposals, in accordance with the point allocation specified in the grant announcement,

the panel will prepare a list of all applications in rank order, together with funding level recommendations and recommendations for conditions, if any.

(d) The list of ranked projects and rating panel recommendations will be forwarded to the Administrator for review and selection.

§ 1709.121 Administrator's review and selection of grant awards.

(a) The final decision to make an award is at the discretion of the Administrator. The Administrator shall make any selections of finalists for grant awards after consideration of the applications, the rankings, comments, and recommendations of the rating panel, and other pertinent information.

(b) Based on consideration of the application materials, ranking panel ratings, comments, and recommendations, and other pertinent information, the Administrator may elect to award less than the full amount of grant requested by an applicant. Applicants will be notified of an offer of a reduced or partial award. If an applicant does not accept the Administrator's offer of a reduced or partial award, the Administrator may reject the application and offer an award to the next highest ranking project.

(c) The projects selected by the Administrator will be funded in rank order to the extent of available funds.

(d) In the event an insufficient number of eligible applications are received in response to a published grant announcement and selected for funding to exhaust the funds available, the Administrator reserves the discretion to reopen the application period and to accept additional applications for consideration under the terms of the grant announcement. A notice regarding the reopening of an application period will be published in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

§ 1709.122 Consideration of eligible grant applications under later grant announcements.

At the discretion of the Administrator, the grant announcement may provide that all eligible but unfunded proposals submitted under preceding competitive grant announcements may